

EXHIBIT A

Our fascination with solar eclipses like the one coming up Monday is thousands of years old. It was thought that the sudden disappearance of the Sun was one of those mysteries that only the gods could explain. Science eventually provided the answers, but for religious believers, a solar eclipse remains an occasion of special significance. Here's NPR's Tom Gjelten.

TOM GJELTEN, BYLINE: Imagine you're a Plains Indian on a perfect summer day, hunting buffalo under a cloudless prairie sky. Suddenly, for no reason, the sun begins to go dark.

ANTHONY AVENI: You go through a twilight like you've never seen. You see shadows like you've never seen. You see colors like you've never seen. And then you see what looks like a hole in the sky.

GJELTEN: And you're terrified. Anthony Aveni is a professor of astronomy and anthropology at Colgate University. In his new book, "In The Shadow Of The Moon," Aveni tell stories of how cultures through the ages have related to solar eclipses. In some pre-modern societies, the sun was itself seen as a living thing. During a solar eclipse, some people figured the sun was being eaten and needed to be alerted to the danger it faced.

AVENI: People banging pans and making noise and pinching their dogs to make them howl at the eclipse. And an anthropologist asked them about this and said, you know, are you chasing away the demons with your noise? And one responded, said, no, we're not chasing away the demons. We're trying to get the sun's attention.

GJELTEN: Those who believed in one God, like the Jews, didn't see the sun as a cosmic player, but a solar eclipse scared them as well. They turned to their rabbis for guidance. Jeremy Brown has studied ancient rabbinic teachings recorded as the Talmud.

JEREMY BROWN: In Judaism, human actions have consequences. And so when the rabbis in the Talmud experienced the darkness of a solar eclipse, they thought it was a curse and asked what could have led to this frightening event.

GJELTEN: Some seemingly random explanations appear in the Talmud, among them that an eclipse could follow from a chief rabbi not being properly eulogised at his death. Once it became clear an eclipse could be predicted, of course it was

harder to see it as a divine response to some human conduct. And yet the notion that an eclipse is a sign from God has persisted in some religious circles. A popular Australian pastor, Steve Cioccolanti, posted a lecture on his YouTube channel recently in which he said next week's solar eclipse may portend something bad happening in America.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

STEVE CIOCCOLANTI: I think that a major earthquake or a plague or meteorite strikes are being foretold. Is that what I'm prophesying - no. I'm just saying that's entirely possible.

GJELTEN: Even in faith traditions that now fully accept the science, a solar eclipse remains an occasion that highlights the wonders of the universe and our small place in it. In a book and on his website Talmudology, Jeremy Brown has written about Jewish understandings of solar eclipses.

BROWN: Today, an eclipse is no longer seen as a threat, as an omen but as something to be celebrated. There is a consensus of opinion amongst the rabbis that an eclipse should be witnessed with joy and happiness and appropriate psalms and blessings.

GJELTEN: Brown and his family are heading to Charleston, S.C., for an eclipse-viewing event at a synagogue. But a total solar eclipse is momentous to everyone. The National Convention of American Atheists will also be in Charleston, hosting a viewing of their own. Tom Gjelten, NPR News.

(SOUNDBITE OF THE DIP'S "WON'T BE COMING BACK")

Copyright © 2017 NPR. All rights reserved. Visit our website terms of use and permissions pages at www.npr.org for further information.

NPR transcripts are created on a rush deadline by an NPR contractor. This text may not be in its final form and may be updated or revised in the future. Accuracy and availability may vary. The authoritative record of NPR's programming is the audio record.

Were you expecting a paywall? Not our style.

We are on a mission to create a more informed public. To make that happen, we need you to do something extraordinary: donate. Your dollars will be transformed into news, shows, and more. And, all that trustworthy journalism will be freely available to everyone. Can you help?

♥ YES, I'LL DONATE

More Stories From NPR



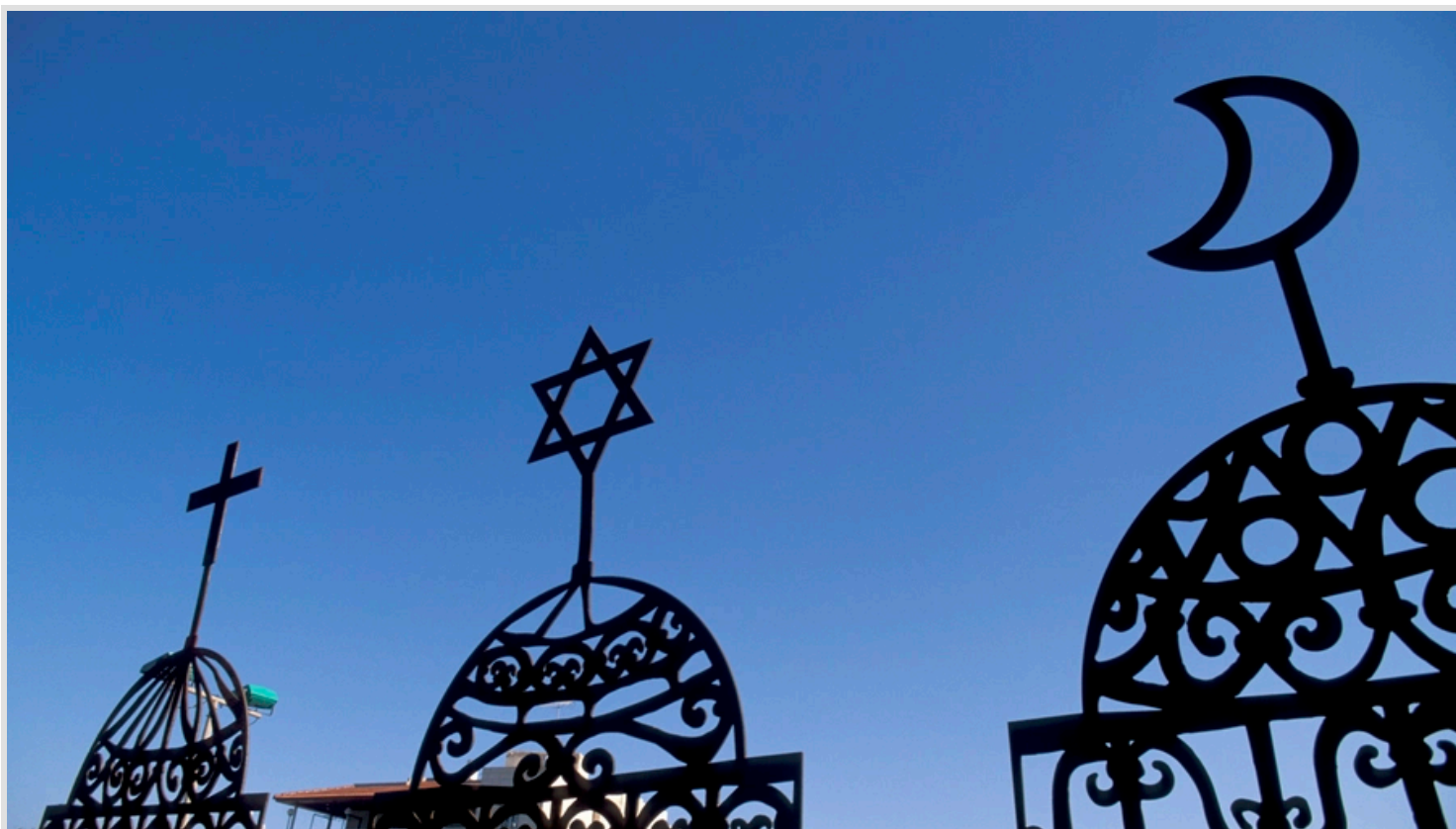
HISTORY

Fractures in the Grand Alliance between Black and Jewish Americans



POLITICS

Cash-strapped Trump is now selling \$60 Bibles, U.S. Constitution included



RELIGION

People say they're leaving religion due to anti-LGBTQ teachings and sexual abuse



RELIGION

Purim — a festive Jewish holiday with an ending often ignored



GLOBAL HEALTH

The Gambia is debating whether to repeal its ban on female genital mutilation



RELIGION

Despite church prohibitions, Catholics still choose IVF to have children

Popular on NPR.org



YOUR MONEY

What is the new etiquette for tipping?



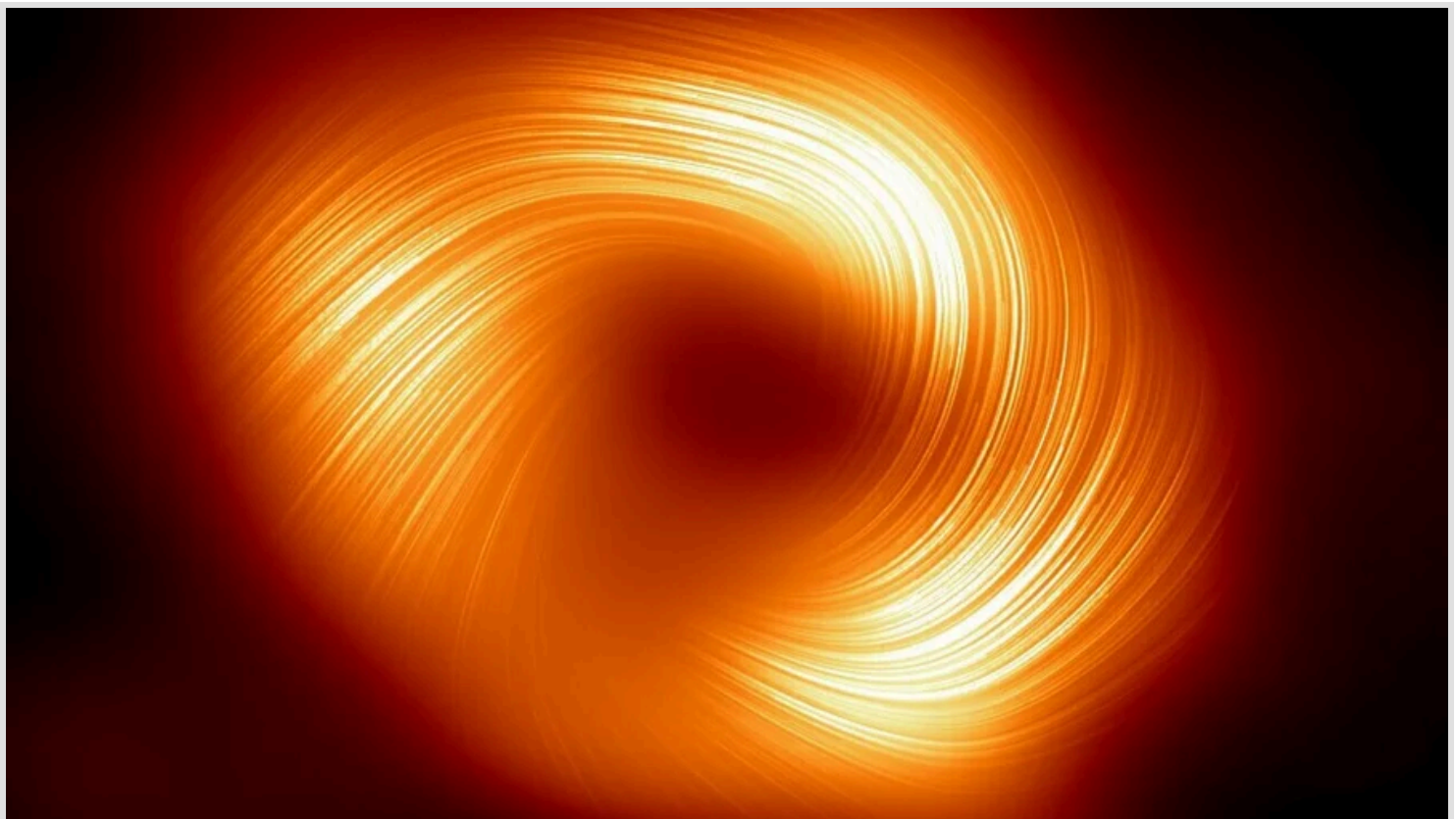
NATIONAL

An Arizona lawmaker announced she was getting an abortion. Here's what happened next



NATIONAL

In Florida, there's détente in the battle between Disney and Gov. Ron DeSantis



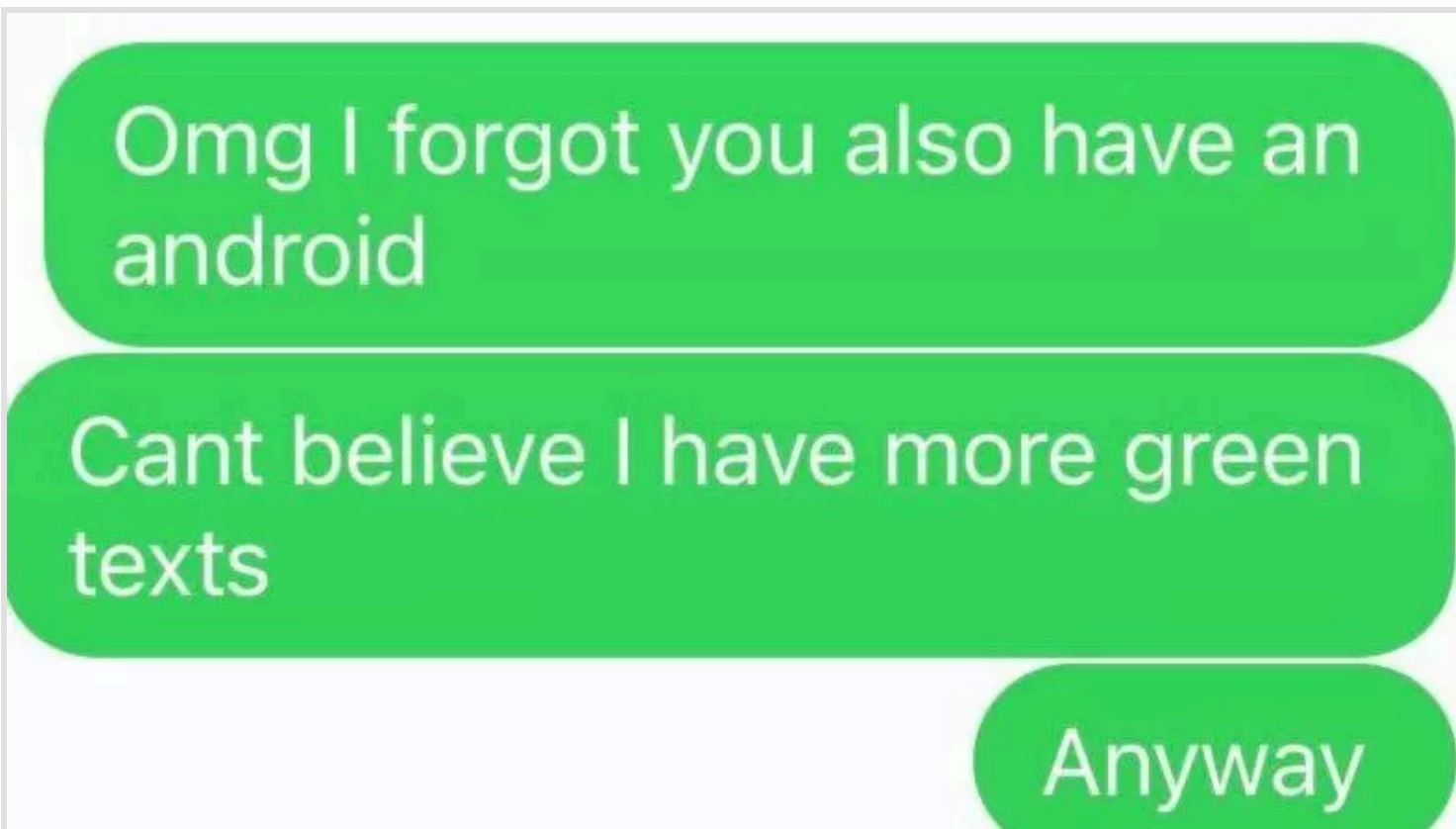
SPACE

Milky Way black hole has 'strong, twisted' magnetic field in mesmerizing new image



OBITUARIES

Best-selling psychologist of 'Thinking, Fast and Slow,' dies at 90



TECHNOLOGY

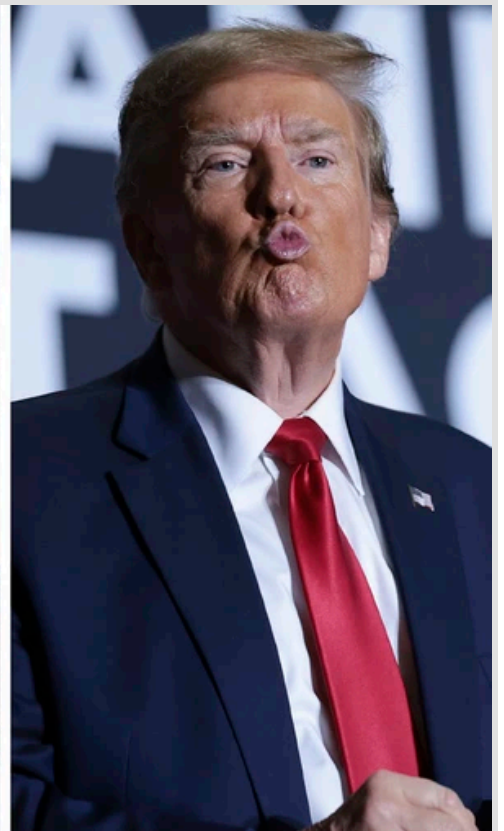
'Green bubble shaming' at play in DOJ suit against Apple

NPR Editors' Picks



WORLD

Boiling weeds, eating animal feed: People in Gaza stave off hunger any way they can



NATIONAL

A comedian, a pug and a politician walk into the quiz. Do you know the punchline?



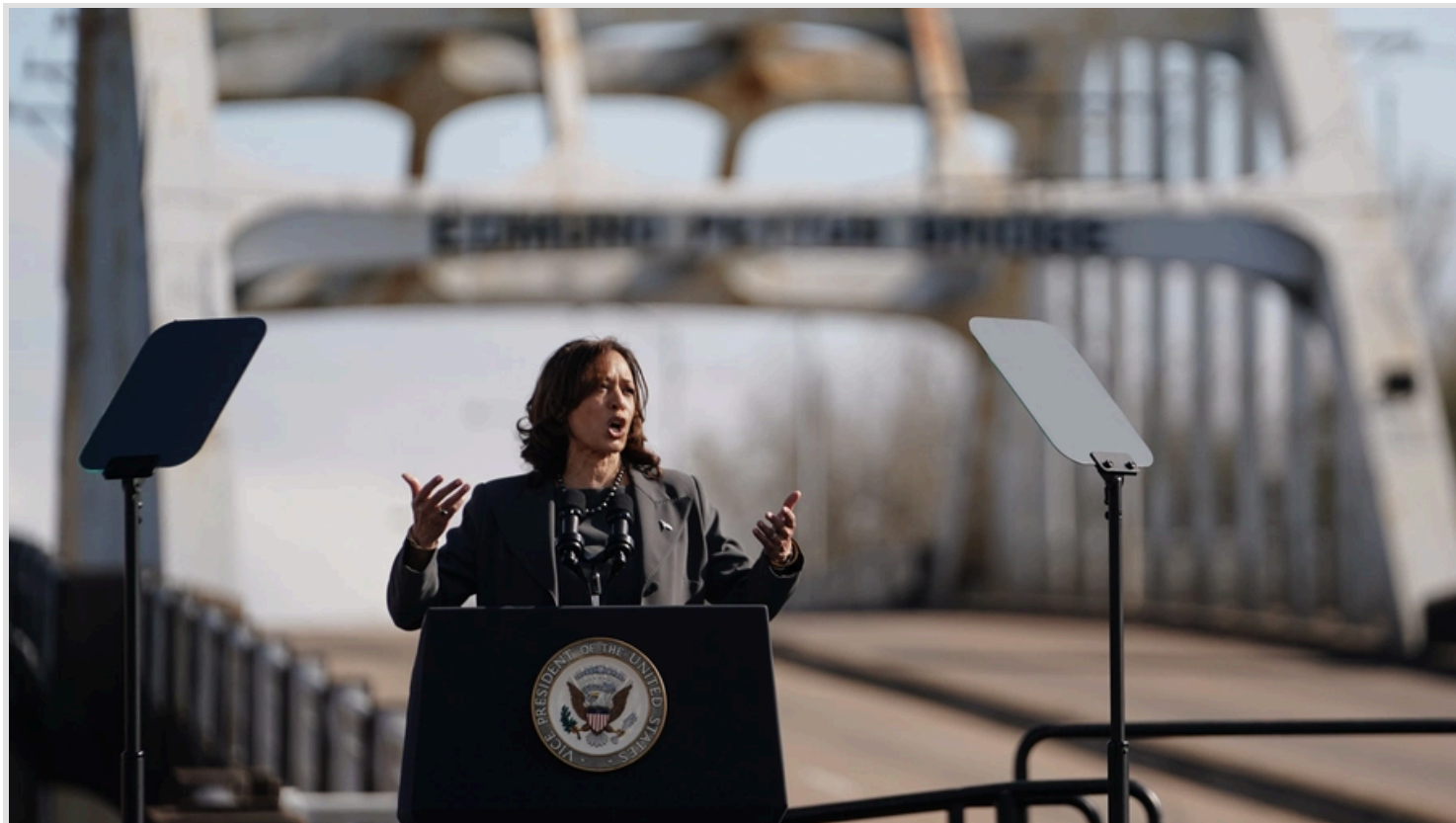
WORLD

U.S. reporter Evan Gershkovich has now spent a whole year jailed in Russia



TV REVIEWS

New Steve Martin documentary spotlights a comedy legend with nothing left to prove



MIDDLE EAST

Kamala Harris called for a cease-fire in Gaza. Here's what we know about the talks



TECHNOLOGY

The White House issued new rules on how government can use AI. Here's what they do

READ & LISTEN

Home

News

Culture

Music

Podcasts & Shows

CONNECT

Newsletters

Facebook

Instagram

Press

Public Editor

Corrections

Contact & Help

ABOUT NPR

Overview

Diversity

NPR Network

Accessibility

Ethics

Finances

GET INVOLVED

Support Public Radio

Sponsor NPR

NPR Careers

NPR Shop

NPR Events

NPR Extra

terms of use

privacy

your privacy choices

text only

© 2024 npr